

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Montenegro nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Ruth Bermudez Montenegro, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Montenegro nomination?

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY), the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Alaska (Mr. SULLIVAN).

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 98 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Rounds
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Leahy	Smith
Carper	Lujan	Stabenow
Collins	Markey	Tester
Coons	McConnell	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Tillis
Duckworth	Merkley	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murkowski	Warner
Feinstein	Murphy	Warnock
Gillibrand	Murray	Warren
Graham	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Grassley	Padilla	Wyden
Hassan	Peters	Young
Heinrich	Reed	

NAYS—41

Barrasso	Ernst	Paul
Blackburn	Fischer	Portman
Blunt	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Shelby
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Cramer	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Lummis	Tuberville
Cruz	Marshall	Wicker
Daines	Moran	

NOT VOTING—4

Casey	Shaheen
Manchin	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Wyoming.

ENERGY

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about

the need for more American energy. When Joe Biden was running for President, he made a lot of promises that seemed to be all to the liberal left. Now, to the hard-working people of my home State of Wyoming, these promises sounded more like direct threats to their lives and their livelihoods.

Joe Biden promised that, if elected, there would be “no more drilling on Federal lands.” “No more drilling,” he said, including offshore. He said “no ability for the oil industry to continue to drill, period.”

Joe Biden is known for his multiple gaffes, but these weren't gaffes. This was intentional. He said it again and again and again on the campaign trail.

Here is another one. He said:

I guarantee you we're going to end fossil fuels.

Joe Biden, on the campaign trail, guaranteeing they are going to end fossil fuels.

During one Democratic debate, Joe Biden was asked a specific question. He was asked if he would sacrifice “hundreds of thousands of blue collar jobs” right here in America to get rid of traditional energy.

Joe Biden said:

The answer is yes.

Yes, happy to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of blue-collar, good hard-working jobs of the American people. And today, the American people are living with the consequences of Joe Biden's decisions.

Joe Biden is already the most anti-American energy President in American history. His policies against American energy have resulted in much higher prices for American families. One in five American families this past year have had to cut their spending to pay their energy bills. They have had to change the way they drive, the way they eat, the way they shop. They have changed, and in many ways had to change, their dreams and their aspirations as their anxieties continued to increase as prices increased but wages didn't keep up.

Yes, prices have gone up in 12 of the 13 months since Joe Biden has taken office. This month, we have seen the highest gas prices ever. The Biden energy crisis is already the worst energy crisis in nearly half a century. So far, Joe Biden hasn't proposed a single solution, too busy blaming everyone other than himself.

Well, the Joe Biden blame game isn't working with the American people. The American people remember Joe Biden's campaign promises, and we have seen him wage war on American energy for 14 consecutive months.

When Joe Biden took office, the price of gas was \$2.38 a gallon. By the time Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, prices had already gone up to \$3.53 a gallon. Today, across the country, the average price is \$4.24.

The increase before Putin's invasion was a lot larger than the increase after Putin's invasion. Month after month

after month, prices have gone up, and at the same time, Joe Biden has doubled down.

First, he shut down the Keystone XL Pipeline, shut down oil and gas leases on Federal lands, and he shut down exploration for energy in Alaska. Now his political appointees in the government are making it impossible to build gas pipelines. As a result, we are producing 1.3 million fewer barrels a day, in America, of oil than we were just before the pandemic. Lower supply, higher prices—that is the law of supply and demand.

So why is supply down? Well, the Biden administration hasn't held a single auction for oil and gas leases since Joe Biden has taken office. At this point in the Obama administration, there had been more than 30 of those auctions. After 14 months in office, there should have been more than 50; in Joe Biden's term, zero.

Courts have said that the President's Executive orders on Federal lands, they said, are illegal. That is the Federal courts. The President stubbornly refused to open up our Federal lands—ignoring the courts—failed to open up the lands to American energy production.

In Western States like my home State of Wyoming, this is devastating. Half of Wyoming is Federal land, and Wyoming is sitting on a treasure trove of American energy. We have it all—oil, gas, coal, uranium for nuclear power. We have wind. We have sunny areas as well. We have it all. We need it all. Joe Biden wants us to keep Wyoming energy in the ground.

The White House claims we don't need to drill more, explore more for energy because there are some leases that have not yet been used.

So why aren't they used? I mean, that is a legitimate question to ask. Well, half of them are waiting for Joe Biden's permission to drill. Just because you paid for a lease doesn't mean you have permission yet to explore for energy on that area. You have to ask permission of the Federal Government after you pay the Federal Government for the lease. It is like renting an apartment and saying: Well, they are not going to give you the key to move in yet.

The Biden administration has to know that, but they continue to try to mislead the American people to say they are not being used.

Many of the leases that are still available are tied up in court by environmental activists, and they can't explore for energy using those areas until the court cases are resolved. That is a normal ploy of the environmental extremist groups that are lined up with the Biden administration to try to keep American energy in the ground and keep American workers off the job.

So it seems that the percentage of leases being used that they can use is where you would want it to be, but there are more that need to be used, but Biden is tying them up.

American energy workers are doing their part. It is time for Democrats in Washington to start doing theirs. Instead, Democrats seem to be taking actions that are going to make this Biden energy crisis and high-energy prices even worse.

Last year, Joe Biden proposed more than a dozen tax increases on American energy. A bipartisan majority in this body—in the U.S. Senate—blocked the tax increases from ever becoming law. Now Democrats are trying to raise taxes on American energy again—again.

There is a bill in this Senate right now to raise taxes on American energy and then send out government checks. That is a bill that is going to make inflation worse. And, by the way, inflation is already at a 40-year high. People are suffering under the inflation like they haven't in a long, long time. Paychecks are not keeping up. People are feeling the pain.

I heard it at the grocery store in Casper, WY, on Sunday; heard it at the airport in Casper, WY, on Monday.

The Democrat's bill will do nothing to increase the supply of energy. In fact, higher taxes would only decrease the supply. Government checks would increase energy demand. You put the two together, it is an inflation nightmare.

Other Democrats have proposed a pause on the gas tax, saying that might actually lower the price a little bit—not much, a little bit. Oh, the ones who cosponsored this, they are all running for election this year, and the plan, of course, is to put the gas tax back in place right after the election.

The gas tax is what is used to pay for work on Federal roads and highways. It is called the highway trust fund. It is how we fund these. I chair the Environment and Public Works Committee, bipartisan work with Senator CARPER. We know how the funding goes to build the highways, the roads, and the infrastructure of this Nation. That is part of it. It is a gimmick.

Even Democratic economist Larry Summers called the idea—I called it a gimmick; he called it “goofy and gimmicky.” This is Larry Summers.

Other Democrats in the House are asking Joe Biden to declare a climate emergency. They want him to tighten his choke hold on American energy production. It is going to drive up prices even more. It is going to drive supply down and prices up. But not one of the ideas that the Democrats are proposing will actually bring down the cost of energy for American families who are struggling today under the inflation of Joe Biden and the Democrats' policies. Not one of their ideas would increase the supply of American energy. So the contrast could not be clearer.

The debate in this country today is a debate between the Biden blame game and American energy production. It is a debate between climate elitists and working families. It is a debate be-

tween Democratic gimmicks and Republican solutions.

The only solution, the real solution to the high energy prices is more supply, and the supply is more American energy. It is not going to Iran; it is not going to Venezuela; it is American energy supply. We have the resources. We have the expertise. We have the workers. We have the energy in the ground. The Biden administration and the Democrats will not let us get it out of the ground. The solution is for Joe Biden and the Democrats to get out of the way so we can get American energy out of the ground, and it can be used here at home in America.

Earlier this month, I sent a letter to the President, the morning after the State of the Union Address. I sent it along with every Republican who serves on the Energy Committee. I am the ranking member of that committee. We sent President Biden a to-do list, 10 action items that he could take today to restore American energy dominance—because we were energy dominant the day he came into office, and we are now energy dependent. That is how you get such an increase in gas prices and the pain at the pump for the American people.

Step 1 is to open up our Federal lands to energy production. The President ought to auction off leases right away, and he has a lot of catching up to do. He should also approve the 4,600 drilling permits that are today stuck in limbo and stop putting barriers to pipelines and infrastructure that are used to move oil and gas to market.

Our Nation is an energy superpower. It is time we began to act like that again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I just wanted to take a few moments to respond to some of the remarks made by my colleague from Wyoming.

I think we all saw a jump in big gas prices when Putin invaded Ukraine. Then this body called upon the President, in a bipartisan manner, to say that we don't want to import any Russian oil into the United States because we don't want our dollars going to Putin to help fund his war. That was the right thing to do. That also increases gas prices.

We also know that there are thousands of leases on public lands that are not being used today and drilled by oil companies that have those leases. In fact, the Senator from Massachusetts, the Presiding Officer, has said we should have a law saying use it or lose it. And I support that position because instead of using it, you see oil companies exploiting the current situation to have windfall profits and use those profits not to reinvest in war production but to engage in stock buybacks to help their CEOs while they keep the prices high.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, I am here today on the floor as we mark day 27 of Vladimir

Putin's unprovoked war against Ukraine.

Each day that the war grinds on, Putin's brutality exceeds the last. As his advances against major cities like Kyiv have slowed, his barbaric war crimes have mounted. Americans have seen the harrowing images of Russian strikes hitting schools, hospitals, maternity wards, and designated humanitarian quarters, indiscriminately killing children, women, and men.

The horror of each day is amplified by the fact that this is not a war of necessity. This is a war of choice, a war chosen by Vladimir Putin. And that choice grew out of Putin's fear of democracy, his fear of freedom of expression.

Just today, Putin's crony court sentenced Russian democracy activist Alexey Navalny to 9 years in a maximum security prison. First, they tried to poison Navalny; now they want to silence him with 9 more years in jail.

So you see the lengths to which Putin is willing to go to silence one man. You can imagine how he fears a democracy of 44 million Ukrainians on his border. He is scared of the example it sets to the Russians that he keeps under his authoritarian thumb. He wants to extinguish—snuff out—the flame of liberty in Ukraine before it catches fire in Russia.

So he started a war, a brutal war. Now, Vladimir Putin has shown the world who he really is: a scared tyrant who thinks he can snuff out democracy and freedom by brute force. But he is wrong. He can kill a lot of people, and he has; but whether it is a matter of weeks or many months, Putin will not be able to kill the aspirations of the people of Ukraine. We see proof of that fact every day in the defiant words and heroic actions of Ukrainians everywhere.

Amidst the horror, the blood, and the misery, we have seen amazing strength. The people of Ukraine are fighting for their homeland, for their freedom, and for the power to control their own destiny. Ukrainian men and women of all backgrounds and ages have joined in this cause, blocking the path of Russian tanks with their bodies, making Molotov cocktails, tending to the wounded, and taking up arms. Their courage speaks to the very best of the human spirit.

Like most Americans, I am deeply inspired by their resolve and their fortitude, and the whole world should learn from their determination because the stakes in this war go far beyond the borders of Ukraine. This is a fight for the future of democracy itself.

As President Zelenskyy said in his address to Congress last week:

Russia has attacked not just us, not just our land, not just our cities. It went on a brutal offensive against our values . . . against our freedom, against our right to live freely in our own country, choosing our own future—against our desire for happiness, against our national dreams—just like the same dreams you have, you Americans.

That was President Zelenskyy last week before Congress. He spoke of self-